

REGION 6 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TOPIC: San Mateo Creek Basin NPL Proposal

DATE: May 8, 2018

CONTACT: Carl Edlund

PURPOSE/ACTION NEEDED: For Information DEADLINE DATE: Not Applicable

BACKGROUND:

EPA Region 6, with assistance from the State of New Mexico, initiated a phased ground water investigation for the San Mateo Creek Basin to assess the nature and extent of contamination in the aquifers related to legacy uranium mining activities. For nearly 30 years, billions of gallons of poor-quality mine water were pumped from mines and discharged to surface drainage channels which saturated and contaminated the shallow alluvial sediments and underlying bedrock aquifers. The results from the initial phase of the study, completed in 2016 for the alluvial aquifer, showed private water wells had been impacted. The second phase of the study, which expands the alluvial ground water investigation and assesses impacts to the bedrock aquifers, will be released this fall. Current data show impacts to some bedrock aquifers and the potential for impact to public water supplies.

CURRENT STATUS:

EPA is currently evaluating this Site for potential National Priorities List (NPL) proposal and conducting outreach activities with state and local community partners and formal consultation with the Navajo, Pueblo of Acoma, and Pueblo of Laguna. EPA received a letter of support for potential NPL inclusion from New Mexico on January 12, 2018. EPA has held meetings with local governments and calls with federal partners and continues to schedule additional outreach with stakeholders. EPA met with former mine owners on March 20, 2018, to discuss the NPL proposal and their ideas for alternatives to proposing the site, which EPA is considering. EPA has committed to providing the mine companies a draft statement of work and administrative order on consent on May 18, 2018, to negotiate a remedial investigation and feasibility study of the basin.

ENVIRONMENTAL/PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERNS:

Contaminated mine discharge has impacted private drinking wells and could impact municipal water supplies for Milan and Grants, impacting over 12,000 residents. The proposal of the Site on the NPL allows EPA to take a comprehensive approach to address threats to drinking water while engaging responsible parties and stakeholders.

TECHNICAL CONCERNS:

- Limited information is known on the impacts to the deeper aquifers.

REGULATORY/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS:

- Some of the source mines for the contamination are part of the Tronox Settlement.
- Some of the source mines for the contamination have mine closure permits and water discharge permits issued by the State agencies.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS:

- Communities, including tribes, have concern about their drinking water supplies.
- Communities within the Grants Mining District are worried about economic development. A state bill has been proposed to support job training opportunities.
- Bluewater Valley Downstream Alliance (BVDA) and Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment (MASE) are two engaged community groups with interest in the site.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

For EPA to continue with the rulemaking process proposing to add the Site to the NPL.



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